

# The RICHES

OF GRACE

"hath appeared to all men." Titus 2:11

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## Is Dancing Biblical?

*"Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing  
praises unto him with the timbrel and harp."*

**P s a l m**

### + To Dance or Not to Dance +

The Bible mentions dancing several times throughout its pages in the Old and New Testaments. It is often asked, "What does the Lord say about dancing?" The truth is, there are Biblical guidelines to dancing. There is the heaven-approved dance of God's people and the condemned dance of the heathen. That is, there is a dance that honors God and there is a dance that dishonors Him. The Bible must be our final authority on this very important issue. If not, we will be in disobedience to our Heavenly Father. We must approach this subject prayerfully in seeking the aid of the Holy Spirit of God, for it is better to be safe than sorry. Amen.

*"Biblical dancing was a religious act, practiced exclusively on joyous occasions...In the day time and the open air...In the Bible, no instances of dancing were found recorded in which two sexes mixed or were united."*

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*"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,  
and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."  
Acts 16:31*

The word dance is mentioned about 27 times in the Scriptures. There are two types of dances mentioned in the Bible, a holy dance and an unholy dance. This article will discuss both types and will show how to determine the difference between the two. There are a number of different Hebrew words translated dance in the Old Testament, but generally it meant to jump, leap, skip, or move in a circle, to march in procession. The Webster's 1828 dictionary defines dancing as, "Primarily, to leap or spring, hence, to leap or move with measured steps, regulated by a tune sung or played on a musical instrument, to leap or step with graceful motions of the body, corresponding with the sound of the voice of an instrument." The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia defines dancing in this manner, "Dancing, that is, the expression of joy by rhythmical movements of the limbs to musical accompaniment, is scarcely ever mentioned in the Bible as a social amusement, except in a general way. . . There is one exception, the dancing of Salome, the daughter of Herodias, before Herod Antipas and his court. . . The other Biblical references to dancing can be grouped under two heads: the dance of public rejoicing, and the dance which was more or less an act of worship."

## THE HOLY DANCE

The first mention of the word dance is in **Exodus 15:20**, "*And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.*" The occasion is the children of Israel crossing the Red Sea. After 430 years of bondage in Egypt, God delivered them and destroyed Pharaoh and his army in the sea. After the miracle of redemption, they celebrated their great victory by dancing, singing, and playing instruments. Because of their excitement, every mode of expressing joy was employed, using the whole body. This occasion would cause any God-fearing saint to dance and sing.

The holy dance was done in a religious setting before the Lord as an act of worship and has no resemblance to the modern day dance. There is not a single instance in the Bible of social dancing in the modern fashion where couples (men and women)

- ▶ Third, "**Does it honor and glorify God?** In **I Corinthians 10:31**, our duty as a Christian is to bring glory to God, "*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*" Can I, with a clear conscience, participate in the modern dance? Will it help my testimony as a believer and lead me to a closer walk with the Lord? Can I carry my Bible to the dance, pray, and testify of God's saving grace before the music begins? Can I invite the Lord Jesus onto the dance floor? May the Lord God give us the understanding by the Holy Ghost to know the difference between the spiritual and the worldly dance ( **I Peter 4:15, Isaiah 5:21, 23, I John 2:15, James 4:4**). I believe the word "reveling" in **I Peter 4:3** and **Galatians 5:21** includes dancing, whereby God condemns it.

In conclusion, unscriptural dancing is not becoming to a Christian and there is a plea (invitation) in **Romans 12:1-2** to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*" Our presentation involves the body, and dancing is associated with the body. A preacher years ago said that, "A praying knee and a dancing leg don't fit on the same foot." Every Christian has an obligation to be obedient to God's Holy and precious Word. Amen.

*"The fact that David led the dances in the presence of God is no sanction for faithful Christians to occupy seats in the public theater. For David did not twist his limbs about in obscene movements. He did not depict in his dancing the story of Grecian Lust."* (cyprian), taken from, "A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs" by David W. Berot.

warned about bodily contact outside of marriage, *“Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.”* Touching leads to immorality, it arouses passions. The modern dance leads to inappropriate physical contact. People dance in order to get next to each other. Individuals love to slow dance in order to press their bodies against each other as they sway to the music. This type of embracing is not only wrong between the unmarried, but is also inappropriate between a husband and wife in public. There is no promotion of dancing in public between male and female in Holy Scripture, the opposite is true.

- Second, **“Does it imitate immorality?”** In the modern dance there are movements that imitate acts of immorality even if there is no body contact as in “Fast Dancing.” The motions and gestures that people perform look as if they are committing fornication. It would be difficult for a Christian to maintain pure thoughts while on the average dance floor, **Phil. 4:8**, *“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”* In **Matthew 5:28**, if we are told not to look upon a woman to lust after her, how can I go to a dance without violating this Scripture where the dress is inappropriate and certain areas of the body have attention drawn to them through dancing? The body language in modern dance is sensual moves, twisting, swiveling the hips, etc. According to **I Thessalonians 5:23**, we are to abstain from all appearances of evil.

danced together. The Jewish dance was not mixed groups, but was performed by the sexes separately, in distinct and separate companies. Even public female dancers, as found in the modern East, were not found among God’s people in the Old Testament. I repeat again, the sacred dance of the Scriptures has no similarity to the modern amusements with emphasis on sexual or sensual body movements. It was done before the Lord in open air in worship to the Lord, marching in time with the song that they sang.

Another instance of a spiritual dance is recorded in **Judges 11:34**, *“And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.”* The context of the immediate chapter tells us that Jephthah’s daughter met him with dancing and joy because of God’s deliverance of their enemy into her father’s hand. Her activity was quite normal for women of the time in performing a dance of joy and victory. In most cases in Scripture it’s the women who danced, with the exception of David.

In **Judges 21:21, 23**, there is a dance of the maidens of Shiloh at an annual feast. In **I Samuel 18:6**, David was met by the women of the cities of Israel with dancing in celebration of his victory over Goliath, *“And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick.”* In **II Samuel 6:16**, David himself was dancing and leaping before the Lord when the Ark of God was brought back into the city, *“And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Saul’s daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart.”* It was joy that motivated David to dance, because years before, the Philistines had taken the ark out of Shiloh (**I Samuel 4:17**) and now it was coming back to its rightful place. The glory of the Lord was returning to Israel once again (**I Samuel 4:21**). In **Jeremiah 31:4,13**, there is dancing in reference to Israel’s restoration when God shall turn their mourning into joy.

In the New Testament, the dance is mentioned in celebration of the prodigal son returning home, **Luke 15:25**, “*Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.*” Also, in **Matthew 11:17**, children played games of dance and often with accompaniment of a musical instrument (**Luke 7:32, Job 21:11**). Evidently, the dance was such a common practice that it entered into children’s games.

According to **Ecclesiastes 3:4**, dancing is symbolic of joy in contrast to mourning, “*A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.*” This seems to be the general meaning of the word throughout Scripture, **Psalms 30:11**, “*Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.*” Biblical dancing has Heavenly approval and in every instance where dancing was approved of by the Lord, the motive was a joyous praise for victory, deliverance, or redemption. Please consider the following references: **Psalms 149:3**, “*Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.*” and **Psalms 150:4**, “*Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.*” Other Scriptures are **Lamentations 5:15, I Samuel 29:5, I Chronicles 15:29**.

## THE UNHOLY DANCE

There is an unholy dance that violates Biblical principles that is sinful and worldly which has its origin in paganism. God’s people of old were commanded to not follow the ways of the heathen, “*Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.*” **Jeremiah 10:2**. This unsanctified dance is usually associated with ungodly music. The unholy dance is clearly seen in **Exodus 32:19**, “*And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses’ anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.*” When Moses came down from the mount with the Ten Commandments he saw the people had made themselves naked and were dancing. There was nothing spiritual about their dance.

They were worshipping the golden calf and probably imitating the Egyptian festivals in their revelry. As a result of their actions, 3,000 people died that day.

In **I Samuel 30:16**, the Amalekites, the enemy of God’s people, were eating, drinking, and dancing before David smote them. The Amalekites were a type of the flesh and were the first enemy of Israel after their deliverance from Egypt (**Exodus 17:8,16, Numbers 24:20**). We can rest assured that their dance was worldly.

According to **Matthew 14:6**, the daughter of Herodias danced before Herod, “*But when Herod’s birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod.*” Herodias hated John the Baptist, for John had spoken against her adulterous marriage to Herod. She used her daughter (Herod’s stepdaughter) to get what she wanted, which was the death of John the Baptist. It was the dancing that excited Herod to the point that he offered Herodias’ daughter whatever she wanted. As we have said before, this type of dance with women before men was unheard of among God’s people. Many believe it was first introduced among the Jews through the influence of Greek customs. Even early church fathers prohibited dancing as an amusement. Most preachers used to preach against the unholy dance and many churches would practice discipline of their members if one attended a dance. A lot has changed over the years!

Most agree that this type of dancing is sexually motivating with its suggestive body movements. The dance of the world is totally sensual and should be avoided at all costs by the Christian.

## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TYPES OF DANCES

There is a vast difference between the Biblical sanctified dance and the modern dance of the world. The worldly dance is rooted in sexuality. Even the lost sinner knows that dancing is sexually based. The following are three questions to ask in determining whether your dance is holy or unholy:

- First, “**Does it involve bodily contact with the opposite sex?**” For in **I Corinthians 7:1**, we are